**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT
FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS**

DIVERSE LEARNEERS

SEGMENT #4: WORKING WITH GIFTED LEARNERS

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Virginia Commonwealth University

The Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute

L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT
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A project administered by

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Professional Development Toolkit for
New and Beginning Teachers

The PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS is a research-based video streamed program with accompanying resource documents. The program is an outgrowth of a previous Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) online mentoring study at Virginia Commonwealth University. The findings of the online mentoring study revealed twelve topics new and beginning teachers felt additional university training would have led them to more effective use of best practices in the classroom. In this program, each of the twelve topics is presented in two to six stand alone video segments. The total number of segments is forty five. Suggested uses, in addition to personal viewing by K-12 teachers for self improvement, include professional development, mentor and mentee, university prospective teacher, and small or large group training.

The facilitators are university faculty and practitioners with field experience. Each is currently involved in teacher training or serves as a staff development administrator. All are currently engaged in educational research, teaching and/or educational policy development.

The teachers in the video programs are classroom teachers. Some of them were participants in the 2006 Online Mentoring Study in which the topics for this project were identified. They represent all disciplines in K-12 grades.

Resource documents for the programs are provided as PDF files to facilitate the use of the 45 video segments. The first set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) an introduction to program facilitators, including a definition of each topic, and a list of the video segments, and (3) a research formative study summary that helped to guide the project's development. The second set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) a full text transcript for each video segment, (3) a set of problems and solutions related to each video segment in the form of a work-study guide, and (4) an annotated bibliographic summary of references and Internet links for each transcript. Many of the organizations and agencies referenced in the transcripts are actively involved in the development of video and professional development presentations that support policy and advocacy.

Every reasonable effort is made to present current and accurate information. Internet content, however, does appear, disappear and change over time. CEPI, as a university-based educational policy research institute endorses no specific position of any listed group.

DIVERSE LEARNERS

SEGMENT #4: WORKING WITH GIFTED LEARNERS

🗁 VIDEO SEGMENT TRANSCRIPT

Diverse Learners: Knowledge and understanding of exceptional students, their differences and the teaching approaches required to provide differentiated instruction.

Facilitator: Dr. Joan Rhodes, Assistant Professor
Department of Teaching and Learning
School of Education
Virginia Commonwealth University

AUDIO	VIDEO
The No Child Left Behind Act defines gifted and talented as the following: Students, children, or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities. (Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101[22]) No doubt you have encountered students in your class that fit this description. They may stand out as being able to tackle and solve the most challenging problems presented in your discipline. However, not all gifted students fit the stereotypical mold. My name is Joan Rhodes. I am a professor in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. Today I would like to share best practices for working with the gifted learners in your classroom. In this segment, we will specifically talk about differentiation lessons to support highly capable students. Although we may be able to imagine the characteristics of a gifted student, it is important to note that these students are very diverse. In fact to address these students, the U.S. Congress passed the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act in 1988 to promote the interests of gifted students. The major goal of this legislation was to support efforts to identify and serve culturally and linguistically diverse students and those from low SES families. Gifted students in these groups as well as others may not work to their potential in the classroom and are often not identified for gifted services. Research studies in the field of gifted education have revealed that teachers rarely differentiate instruction for gifted students. There are many strategies for accommodating the needs of advanced students; however assigning more of the same work is not one of them! Teachers can modify the curriculum in three ways to support gifted learners.	Dr. rhodes

First, an educator can enhance the content of what is learned by providing challenging materials related to the topic of study. Organizing curriculum content around themes helps gifted students' find connections between subjects unlike when they study content in isolation. Secondly, teachers can look at the thinking processes required in their instruction. Increasing the use of real-world problem solving allows gifted students to apply higher level thinking skills to resolve issues. Educators can modify the learning environment to support the psychological well being of students. Classrooms that are learner-centered offer students an opportunity to share their talents and expertise and think creatively. Finally, teachers can modify the products that are created as a result of classroom instruction. Student products should provide evidence that they are synthesizing and creating rather than summarizing existing information. Let's have a look at how our teachers are modifying instruction in their classrooms to meet the needs of gifted students.	
My name is Christina Stewart and I am a 6th grade Exceptional Education teacher at L. Douglas Wilder Middle School. This is my third year teaching. I have not had the opportunity to teach gifted students; but I believe some of the approaches I use in my classes are appropriate for all students except that they must be modified to address individual interests and performance levels. For example, reasonable but high expectations of students cross all instructional boundaries. I need to challenge my exceptional education students just as a teacher of gifted students must provide challenging instruction. Second, an IEP (Individualized instructional Plan) is desirable for all students. In this way, instruction is sequential and based upon documented needs. I have read about IEPs for other students outside exceptional education programs. The IEP also assists time management which is a concern for all teachers in today's classroom.	**CHRISTINA STEWART**
My name is Gina Brooks, I teach English and reading in a middle School. This is my third year teaching. One major practice for teachers of the gifted is provision challenging materials. Teachers should have alternative equally challenging assignments and activities even when there are moments when students finish their assignments ahead of time. For example, when a child has completed his or her work early, teachers can have lesson-related higher level thinking questions printed on flashcards for students. Having these available for students can take the lesson a step further and encourage thought-provoking discussions among peers.	**GINA BROOKS**
Meeting the needs of bright children can not be overlooked. As we plan instruction for our differentiated classrooms, we must think about ways we can design lessons to stretch our gifted students and allow them to contribute to classroom learning.	**DR. RHODES**

🗀 PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Diverse Learners: Knowledge and understanding of exceptional students, their differences and the teaching approaches required to provide differentiated instruction.

Ask yourself: What do you use to meet the needs of diverse learners in your classroom? How do you differentiate tasks in your classroom?

Suggested use for this module:

1. Analyze:

Please select one of the scenarios below and problem-solve a list of possible solutions. Record your ideas in the space provided. Discuss these ideas with your other educators (mentor, colleagues, or other beginning teachers).

2. View:

Watch the corresponding video on this topic. How does this information change your ideas?

3. Compare:

Revisit the scenario selected. Next, review the section entitled, "Possible Solutions" comparing the ideas listed with your own list.

4. Reflect:

How will you apply this new information to your current or future classroom? What goal will you set to help you begin to change your practices? What support is needed to help you accomplish this goal?

5. Apply:

List the first step towards change below. Create a timeline for success and place deadlines in your personal planner as a reminder. How will you know when you have met your goals?

Scenarios 1 & 2: Diverse Learners

Scenario 1:
All the students in second grade have the same spelling list (List 3). After the pretest on Monday, the classroom teacher realizes that the list of words was not appropriate for most of the children in the class. Many students had already mastered the words and received a score of 100%. Other students were totally frustrated by the list an unable to spell any of the words. How could this teacher differentiate this task to be more appropriate for all of the students?

Scenario 2:

A middle-school teacher uses whole group instruction everyday to teach his students algebra. He feels uncertain about changing his routine for fear of behavior problems if he tries cooperative learning activities. What could he try to differentiate his learning format? Where should he begin?

Circle the scenario that you selected below:

Scenario 1   Scenario 2

Record a list of your own possible solutions here:

Summary & Goal Setting:

📂   **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Differentiated instruction requires teachers to be flexible in their teaching approach and how they adjust and present the curriculum. Differentiation also requires thoughtful teacher presentation of the information to learners rather than expecting students to modify the curriculum. Consider student differences and incorporate techniques into your lessons while planning rather than waiting to modify the materials after the lesson has been created. Think about changing either your learning process and/or the student products which are generated to add variety to your lesson plans.

Begin by asking yourself the following questions:

- How will you structure the lesson to meet the needs of students you expect to have difficulties? What supports will you build into your lesson plan?

- How will you structure the lesson to meet the needs of students you know will master the concepts fairly quickly or already know the information presented in the lesson?

- What will you do to keep early finishers (individual students or groups) engaged in instruction?

It can sometimes feel overwhelming to try to differentiate everything in your classroom. Not everything needs to be adjusted or differentiated. Start small by incorporating one or two strategies which will improve your lessons. As you experience success, increase the options that you try with students. 1. Begin with what is essential for learning. What key elements are required for students to be successful with your lesson? 2. Next, consider adjusting the learning process or product within your lesson.

Consider the following options:

- Routines and Formats (Teacher uses a variety of formats during instruction including individual work, partner activities, small group instruction, cooperative learning activities, and whole class instruction)

- Type of Task (Incorporate more authentic and meaningful work assignments versus using worksheets or skill and drill reproducible)

- Stations or Centers (Allow students to rotate to different area of the room and complete problem-solving or hands-on tasks. Once routines have been established, begin working with small groups or conferencing with individual students)

- Create learning scenarios which require students to utilize real-life objects or apply content knowledge to solve everyday problems. Incorporate opportunities for students to research and investigate topics of interest.

- Use activities which are leveled or have different tiers or choices depending on student needs or interests (learning contracts are a helpful tool for managing choices).

- Give interest assessments which help you identify student academic and recreational interests and learning styles. Try to include different learning modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) into your lessons.

- Do you always assess students in the same way? Why not vary the type of assessment you use. Could students create a graphic organizer, write a letter, or complete a project to demonstrate the depth of their learning?

- Conduct diagnostic assessments to build student growth across time. For example, a reading or spelling inventory will ensure that all learners are in materials at the appropriate level (independent or instructional) rather than working at a frustration level.

- Are you relying too much on the same materials? Don't rely solely on the textbooks. Use literature or trade books, source documents, current events, websites, and songs to promote greater learning.

- Encourage more high-level thinking. Without proper planning, many beginning teachers rely on 'spur of the moment' questions or examples. Use Bloom's Taxonomy to generate questions which require more depth of thinking. Record a couple of questions and examples that students will relate to and place these on index cards next to your teaching location. Access this information periodically during the lesson to keep your expectations high.

🗁 ANNOTATED RESEARCH AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

❖ One of the most complex challenges in teacher education and professional development is preparing novices and mentor teachers to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Increasing student diversity, coupled with an emphasis on standards and accountability, has dramatized the need to build expertise in differentiating curriculum and instruction for preservice and inservice teachers.

Brimrimijoin, Kay. & Alouf, James. (2003). *New dimensions for building expertise in mentoring and differentiation*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 472630)

❖ The model of differentiated instruction requires teachers to be flexible in their approach to teaching and adjusting the curriculum. It also requires presentation of information to learners rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum.

Hall, Tracey. (2002). *Differentiated instruction*. Retrieved September 22, 2007, from
    http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_diffinstruc.html

❖ Practices noted as central to differentiation have been validated in the effective teaching research conducted from the mid 1980s to the present. These practices include effective management procedures, grouping students for instruction, and engaging learners.

Hall, Tracey. (2002). *Differentiated instruction*. Retrieved September 22, 2007, from
    http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_diffinstruc.html

❖ Key elements guide differentiation in the education environment: Content (what a teacher plans to teach), Process (how a teacher plans instruction), and Products (teacher assessment of content).

Differentiated instruction at Memorial Middle School. (n.d.). Retrieved September 22, 2007, from
    http://beverlyschools.org/memorial/di/diinfo.htm

❖ Teachers who differentiate instruction focus on their role as coach or mentor, and give students as much responsibility for learning as they can handle. These teachers grow in their ability to (1) assess student readiness through a variety of means, (2) "read" and interpret student clues about learning needs and preferences, (3) create a variety of ways students can gather information and ideas, (4) develop varied ways students can explore and "own" ideas, and (5) present varied channels through which students can express and expand understanding.

The Role of the teacher in a differentiated classroom. (2007). Retrieved September 22, 2007, from
    http://allafrica.com/stories/200710161050.html

❖ Differentiating instruction is an essential tool for integrating technology into classroom activities.

Differentiating instruction. (2004). Retrieved September 22, 2007, from
    http://members.shaw.ca/priscillatheroux/differentiatinglinks.html

❖ In preparation for differentiation, the teacher diagnoses the difference in readiness, interests, and learning style of all students in the class, through use of a variety of performance indicators.

Differentiating instruction. (2004). Retrieved September 22, 2007, from
    http://members.shaw.ca/priscillatheroux/differentiatinglinks.html

❖   The effect of teacher beliefs and perceptions influences the teacher's academic expectations of
     students with varying academic abilities.

     Ehlers, Kristy. & Montgomery, Diane. (1999). *Teachers perceptions of curriculum modifications for
     students who are gifted.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 429750)

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